

Written for this Paper

COMPETITION AS CALAMITY.

There is an intensity of feeling pervailing in general trade circles in regard to the situation, because all prophecies of a political character have failed; the repeal of the Sherman silver bill, the change in tariff, the issue of bonds, have not singly or in combination restored confidence, revived trade, or relieved widespread stringency and distress. Prices of the four great staples have surely and steadily declined. Wheat is ruinously low, cotton has gone down below all precedent, sugar is phenomenal as to price, and iron is baffling all experience in its fall. The anxiety to secure what market there is, makes competition unusually close, and margins are so reduced that profit is nearly out of the question. Men who must realize, cut and cut again; other holders look on appalled, finally yielding to the situation, which becomes less and less satisfactory.

So trade reports (which probably add to the uncertainty) tell us that "print cloths" have gone down to the "lowest price on record;" that "woolen and cotton manufacturers in the eastern, central and middle states declare prices to be so low and broken that there is practically no profit;" that wheat, corn and pork go down in sympathy, and that "business hesitates as much as it has done for months." The labor market is in commotion; sympathy runs high in its ranks with the Brooklyn strike, which is hardly likely to succeed, for the number of unemployed everywhere brings that competition which some employers are more than ready to accept.

If mankind are not fast becoming "Ishmaelites," it must be because of a restraining power greater than that possessed by man, for self assuredly predominates; it permeates society from the highest to the lowest, in nations afar off, as well as ours at home, and no doubt it is the instinct of self-preservation in Europe which is drawing gold from here at an almost fabulous rate. There is doubt in regard to the honesty, integrity, or ability of this nation to meet its liabilities, or its securities would not be so persistently returned, and the contemplated issue of five hundred million dollars in bonds, as suggested by special message of the President, is just as likely to produce increased uncertainty—nay consternation, abroad, as to make the nation's financial status more stable and secure. The world of investors—lenders, are aware that thirty years have elapsed since the close of the war, and that there are no special government expenses growing out of international controversy. They see that our national career is one of extravagance, that the government is leading "a fast life;" building war vessels for imaginary possibilities; continuing an outrageous pension list; exhibiting a disposition to meddle; proposing bonds for Nicaragua, and engaging in expensive projects of a public character, as if there was no limit to revenue, or as if times were booming as in years gone by.

Every state and city has had to institute economical action, to reduce expenses and to defer desirable improvements. Cor-

porations, firms and individuals have had to cut down—to limit and restrain themselves, or go to the wall. Had they pursued the policy of the government, the nation would be swamped with "promises to pay," universal repudiation would have been inevitable, and even President Cleveland probably sees that to retire non-interest bearing notes in favor of interest-bearing bonds can be but a shadowy form of relief, seeing that the revenue has now failed to meet the expenditure by near ten millions, according to Dun & Co., during the first three weeks of the just past January, while the shipment of gold to Europe during the same month, from New York alone, was at least \$15,000,000! It may be that the administration simply aims to hide over its term of office, and then leave the evidently unsolved conundrum of finance to shrewder, wiser, more original, or more aggressive heads. The timid half suggestion that the silver in the treasury should be used for current expenses is too evidently a sop to the populace, one upon which the West can place very little if any reliance. It was not hearty enough or earnest enough to create any general revival of the mining interests, and it is pleasant to note that the silver producing sections are accommodating themselves to the decline for the time being, as they surely will to its revival when that may come.

Utah might find stimulus in varying its products in a consideration of some things done in the Golden state; not that we have its climate or its push—but Utah had fruit, fine fruit, before California had any save grapes. But this immense industry there and now almost paralyzes belief and yet testifies to a market able to absorb the whole, and of which Utah should have its share. The total shipments of produce to the East last year by rail from what might be called the San Francisco or northern California district, amounted to about five hundred thousand tons, or nearly fifty thousand tons more than 1893, this with an additional one hundred thousand tons from Los Angeles and the south, makes a grand total of which nearly one half was fruit, of the estimated value of twenty-five million dollars, or six millions over any previous year. This grand showing for the past twelve months was more than double the value of the entire wheat crop of the state, which the world has looked upon as of great magnitude. And it is worthy of note too, that considerable of this fruit was fresh, or rather undried—the form for Utah probably, if she systematized and packed properly her surplus crop, though success means careful gathering, packing and guarantee as to quality and variety.

It would seem from the standpoint of exportation that fruit raisers here could do best with few varieties, and those of a good keeping and shipping kind. New orchards this coming spring should be planted on this idea, and fall apples would give employment when the farm crops were mainly out of the way. Company orchards where there was land might likely be profitable if system and business tact controlled. Any way, diversified industries are the need of today in Utah, and will become increasingly so as years roll by.

Whatever the conclusions as to industrial enlargement, the avoidance of uncontrolled competition is a very desirable thing. When producer is pitted against producer, manufacturer against manufacturer, tradesman against tradesman, laborer against laborer, be sure there is something needs correction; there needs combination of some kind if only for self defense, or for the securing of fair and honest reward for toil, whatsoever its manifestation. When railroad employees strike, or Carnegie's men, or coal miners, or Brooklyn car-drivers, it is assumed by corporations that they pay the wages; but this is not so; their supporters and patrons do this, and it is not in history where the latter have rebelled against charges, save where subject to an exasperating monopoly like that of coal in Utah. The margin in railroad charges, in iron, in coal, in car fare, are so infinitesimal to the consumer or user, that the great public can see no need of controversy, but sympathize with the strikers and think "their cause is just." The only query is as to how the claim shall be secured. Trade associations are formed for this, but they aim and fail. The effort, however, calls public attention to a grievance, and statesmanship and philanthropy to the providing of a remedy. The farmer has a price put on his labor, whether wheat, corn, beets, potatoes, wool, hay or meat; and the average man says this price is made by competition. Why then is there no combination among the farmers? Why do they not strike? Or are they less self-helpful than the artisan, mechanic or laborer in other directions? So with merchants, or as they are called locally, storekeepers. Is not the same spirit of cut-throat competition working unrest and dissatisfaction right here at home? And does not this develop into trickery and dishonesty, and so prepare the way for failure? Can men even select "a leader" in their trade, and by offering it at but twenty per cent of its past hope to secure a permanent reputation? Of course the whole trade world knows that sugar has never borne much, if any profit; but New York dealers have combined to make that article carry its legitimate share.

We note that our home factories are on the defensive also, and by combination for self-protection no doubt they will do better. The consumers will watch jealously though the underlying motive of this as of all other similar moves; for while they want industries to be formed and live, to manufacture and profit thereby, they also expect moderation in price, guaranty as to quality and from the manufacturers consideration for the public as for themselves.

Society with its apparently conflicting interests in trade, finance, production, distribution and labor, needs a man or men to grapple with and straighten out its now tangled affairs. Unless he or they come, and that speedily, the interested spectator will believe that "the wisdom of the wise hath perished, and that the understanding of the prudent is hid," and that the world is much nearer to the realizing of the fulfillment of the prophecies, which includes calamity and "distress of nations," than it is prepared to believe.